

Approved 7/11/13

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

June 6, 2013 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, Vice Chair; William Barry, M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: M. Wyllis Bibbins, Joseph Ferrara

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director, Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM and designated alternate members Berg and Tobin to vote in the order listed. He explained the consent agenda procedure, reviewed the agenda, and asked if there were any cases that any member of the public, commission, or staff would recommend for approval per the consent agenda for which it would not be necessary to have a full hearing. Cases 3058 and 3060 were recommended. Mr. King asked if anyone present wanted a hearing on either of those cases.

Hearing no objections, Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the following cases, per the procedures of the consent agenda policy, and authorized the staff to review and approve construction details:

Case 3058: 1336 Massachusetts Ave., by the Cambridge Trust Company. Install new exterior signage and security cameras.

Case 3060: 16 Craigie Street, by Immaculada Silos-Santiago and Thomas Duell. Construct replica of original front porch.

Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Ms. Tobin voting as alternates.

[Mr. Barry arrived.]

New Business

259-261 Brookline Street. Potential demolition to allow expansion of the Old Morse Playground.

Mr. Sullivan introduced the matter by noting that this was not a public hearing, but an informal discussion requested by Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi to sound out the commissioners on the possible demolition of an 1876 two-family house adjacent to the Old Morse Playground. He showed slides of the property.

Mr. Rossi said that the owner of the house had been trying to sell it for a long time, and would be amenable to a "friendly taking" so that it could become a community garden. The affordable housing agencies agreed that it would not be suitable for rehabilitation because of its condition. The porches were failing, the roof was open to the weather, and there was black mold inside.

Mr. Bibbins asked how the property was sited. Mr. Rossi passed out a plot plan and noted that it was bounded on two sides by the playground. A concrete block storefront encroached slightly on the property but would not be taken.

Mr. Rossi told Ms. Berg that the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association would be consulted after he received some preliminary feedback. He told Ms. Harrington that the owner had approached him, saying that he had been offered \$500,000. There were no liens that he knew of.

Mr. King presumed that the building would be found significant. The Commission ordinarily reviewed plans for the replacement project, and an empty lot was not usually favored over a significant building. He appreciated the public purpose in adding more park land, and said that if it was not associated with a great architect, resident, or event he personally could consider it not preferably preserved. Even if it were found preferably preserved it would only mean a six-month delay.

Mr. Rossi said the area was so densely populated that he was always looking for more open space.

Mr. Sullivan said that he considered it to be a significant building, but in view of the heroic efforts needed to repair it and the public benefit of having new open space he would probably recommend that it be found not preferably preserved.

Ms. Harrington observed that the site might otherwise become townhouses. Ms. Berg said it would not be appealing to live next to a pizza shop.

Mr. King said that the CPA process might provide good feedback on the plan. Mr. Rossi thanked the commissioners for their time and insights.

Case 3068: 159 Brattle St., by the Cambridge Historical Society. Install a temporary sign on the lawn (Determination of Procedure)

Gavin Kleespies, Executive Director of the Society, presented an application for a temporary sign that would not conform to the Commission's sign guidelines. The Society was conducting a capital campaign and would like to have a sign over the summer to demonstrate the amount being raised. It would be 5' by 3' and would not be illuminated. At Mr. Sullivan's request he agreed that the CPA grant could be recognized on it.

Mr. Irving noted that he was a Councilor of the Society. Other commissioners identified themselves as advisors. Mr. King said that only members of the Society's governing body should need recuse themselves.

Ms. Berg asked if approval would set a precedent. Mr. Sullivan said that it would not.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the sign, subject to compliance with the procedure to send with a 10-day notice to the abutters. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously with Mss. Berg and Tobin voting and Mr. Irving not voting.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Procedures

Cases L-100-101-102 (continued): Kendall Square Building, 238 Main St.; J.L. Hammett Building, 264 Main St.; and Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, 292 Main St., MIT Investment Management Co., owner. Consider further extension of landmark designation study

Mr. Sullivan reminded the Commission that the landmark designation study for the Kendall Square buildings which had been initiated in September 2011 was approaching the end of another extension. The Commission had voted in June 2012 that the buildings were eligible for designation, but rather than force the matter before the City Council had agreed with MIT to continue the study until the Kendall Square rezoning and other matters had been resolved. MIT was just beginning an internal study of an eastern campus gateway, and Commission staff agreed that the study could appropriately be extended again to allow that process to work out.

Mr. King suggested approving a one-year extension as long as MIT agreed that the Commission would continue to have authority over new construction or alterations on the premises of the three buildings as if the one year period referred to in Section 2.78.180.1 of the City Code commenced on the date of the Commission's next meeting. Mr. Irving so moved, Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3050: 3 Garden St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Change exterior paint colors, install new slate roof, repair trim, clapboards, and chimneys.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building.

Mark Verkennis of Harvard Planning & Project Management said that the Graduate School of Education proposed an exterior rehab that included replacing the slate roof, rebuilding the chimneys, repairing clapboards and trim, replacing gutters, and painting the exterior. The incorrect shutters would be removed and replaced with correct ones if the budget allowed.

Mr. Sullivan questioned the proposed aluminum gutters, which were not available in an appropriate profile. He hoped to see shutters, but said they should be correctly sized and installed.

John Sanzone of 540 Memorial Drive asked about the age and purpose of the ell. Mr. Sullivan said that it was partly original, but had been altered many times.

There being no further public questions or comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed, subject to the approval by the staff of the construction details and materials. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting.

Case 3059: Mason Street., by City of Cambridge. Reconstruct Mason St. from Garden to Brattle and install new landscaping.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of existing conditions.

Kathy Watkins of the Department of Public Works introduced Kara Falise, an assistant engineer, who said that the roadway would be resurfaced and sidewalks rebuilt from Garden to just short of Brattle Street. There would be raised crossings, new ramps, and new street trees. Curb lines would be undisturbed. Wire-cut brick would be laid on a 4" asphalt base for uniformity.

Mr. King asked if there was a solution to the problem of tree roots lifting the bricks. Mr. Watkins said the asphalt helped, but they were always studying that issue.

Mr. Crocker asked about utility work. Ms. Watkins said that the gas main had already been replaced.

Mr. Sullivan reported that he had received favorable comments from three abutters. He noted that the Washington Elm plaque at the Garden Street intersection was not called out on the plan, and asked Ms. Watkins to take it into account when planning the work.

There being no further public questions or comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Ms. Berg moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed, with the condition that the Washington Elm plaque be evaluated and repaired if necessary. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Preservation Grants

Mr. Sullivan reported that the Preservation Grant program had an available balance of about \$69,000, but that a new appropriation could be expected in September.

PG 13-4: 20 Kelly Rd., by Just-A-Start Corp. Remove asbestos siding and install new clapboards and trim on front elevation. \$30,000 requested.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application for \$30,000 from Just A Start for a Home Improvement Project for an owner-occupied Queen Anne two-family house. The asbestos siding would be removed from the front façade, which would be restored along with the porch. The cost of this part of the project was estimated at \$37,000; he recommended a grant of \$25,000.

IPG 12-1: 1450 Mass. Ave./3 Church St., by First Parish Church. Replace siding and trim on north elevation; install new gutters and downspouts. \$25,000 approved in principle; \$50,000 final requested amount.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the extensive discussions he had had with the building committee of the church. The Commission had granted a Certificate of Appropriateness to remove and replace the siding on the north wall of the church, and had earlier agreed in principle to grant the project up to \$25,000. They now asked that the \$25,000 be confirmed and increased to \$50,000.

Ms. Berg asked if an application was expected for the Grace Methodist Church. Mr. Sullivan reported that the Pentecostal congregation buying the building was aware that grants were available, but they did not yet own the building. Funds should be available for them in September.

Mr. Irving moved to approve grants of \$25,000 for 20 Kelly Road and \$50,000 for the First Parish Church on a funds-available basis. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the May 2, 2013 minutes. Mr. Bibbins noted that he had not been present, and Ms. Burks said his initials were the same as Mr. Barry's. Mr. King offered the following corrections:

Page 1: Mr. Irving asked about the illumination ...

Chandra Ms. Harrington ...

Sarah Ms. Burks ...

Jo Dr. Solet ...

Page 2: ~~Mr.~~ Dr. Aiello ...

Naney Ms. Aiello ...

Page 5: Mr. King noted that they developers ...

Ms. Harrington moved to initiate a landmark designation study of the house and lot at 59 Cushing Street. ...

Page 7: The two departments (ISD and CHC) ~~needed~~ to reach ...

Substitute "Barry" for "Bibbins" throughout

Mr. Irving moved to approve the minutes as amended, Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Harrington asked about the grant for the Western Avenue Baptist Church. Mr. Sullivan reported that after long negotiations he had sent the pastor a draft contract and never heard back. The grant for the Cambridge Community Center had been made in principle, because they were beginning a capital campaign and it wasn't reasonable to tie up funds until they were ready to use them.

Mr. Sullivan reported that some construction details of the glass connector between the North Prospect Congregational Church and the Art Institute building had changed, but that the project was on course and the building would be moved as soon as a new foundation was prepared.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3061: 59 Cushing St., by Emery Homes LLC. Restore house and construct two additional townhouses.

Mr. Sullivan reminded the commissioners that they had initiated a landmark designation study of the property at the May meeting. The owners had applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness to restore the house and build two townhouses attached to it. The staff had allowed them to remove the asbestos siding to expose the original clapboards and trim, and he showed slides of the present appearance of the building. There were no window hoods, water table, or cornice brackets [although later examination showed the presence of brackets], but the building did have shutters. There was evidence of an unusual arched hood over the entrance. The owner proposed to replicate the original details with all new materials.

Ms. Berg objected to the angled parking. Other members noted the balcony over the bay window and the entrance detail.

Eamon Fee, the co-owner, arrived, and said that the plans before the Commission were the result of its action to preserve the building, and had been developed in consultation with the staff. They had removed a garage from the plan and would preserve the original ell as well as the house. The clapboards were riddled with nails and needed replacement. The wood 2+2 windows were modern replacements and would be replaced with Jeld-Wens of the same pattern. They would replace the concrete porch with wood and replicate the arched hood.

Mr. King asked about the location of the MWRA easement, along the right side of the property. Ms. Berg asked if the parking conformed to zoning. Mr. Fee said there would be one space per unit, plus three extra spaces because neighbors were concerned about on-street parking. The curb cut could not be moved.

Mr. King asked for public questions or comments, but there were none.

Mr. Barry asked about the arched door hood. Mr. Fee said that he had found one example, but that that detail could be decided later if the Commission wished.

Ms. Harrington asked about the proposed clapboard replacement. Mr. Sullivan concurred with Mr. Fee's assessment. Mr. Irving agreed that they should be replaced.

Mr. King complimented the plan and agreed with replication of the details. Mr. Sullivan noted that they would include 5/4 trim, thick sills, an appropriate band moulding, and the same reveal on the clapboards. Mr. Fee said that he could also replicate the dentil detail on the bay window cornice.

Mr. Irving asserted that the Juliette balcony was stylistically inappropriate, expensive, and unusable. Mr. Fee replied that it was a selling point; buyers got giddy at the sight of one.

Ms. Berg thought the house was too plain for shutters. Mr. Barry observed that the old house was fully engaged in the larger mass, and asked why it needed to be set apart with cedar clapboards when the rest would be Hardiplank. Would there be shutters only on the front and not on the new parts? Ms. Berg said it made sense to have new material there. Mr. Irving wondered about establishing a different maintenance cycle. Mr. Fee said the distinction made sense to him – even the shutters. Ms. Harrington wondered why there shouldn't be shutters if they were present originally. Mr. Sullivan agreed.

Ms. Berg repeated her reservations about the number and position of parking spaces.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed, except for the Juliette balcony, subject to the approval by the staff of the construction details and materials, and to delegate approval of the entry hood to the Architects Committee. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting.

There being no further business, Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 5/2/2013

John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr
Tom Chadina	Weymouth, Mass
Ton Johnson	1336 Massachusetts Avenue
Mark Verkennis	1350 Massachusetts Avenue
Linda Kuczynski	12 Appian Way
Gavin Kleespies	159 Brattle Street
Kara Falise	147 Hampshire Street
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street #404

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.